



AGENDA ITEM: 7

SUMMARY

Report for:	Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny
Date of meeting:	22 September 2016
PART:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	DENS PERFORMANCE REPORT
Contact:	Cllr Margaret Griffiths, Portfolio Holder for Housing Natasha Brathwaite – Strategic Housing Group Manager
Purpose of report:	To update Housing & Communities OSC on the performance of the Elms contract, managed by DENS.
Recommendations	That the Housing & Communities OSC to note the report.
Corporate objectives:	Affordable Housing
Implications:	<p><u>Customer service</u> The aim of the contract is to improve outcomes for single homeless clients, reduce the cycle of repeat homelessness and eradicate street homelessness by working in partnership with DENS.</p> <p><u>Value for money</u> The tender for the contract was awarded to DENS on the basis that they met the requirements set out from the scope of the bid and the Council's vision for the Elms. By having a more proactive partnership approach to preventing homelessness, this will help manage any impact on Council services, caused by continuing housing demands and rise in homelessness, thus reducing expenditure to meet demand, for example reducing B&B usage.</p>
Risk Implications	All staff associated with the Elms have received essential training in line with the contract and Council staff's essential

	training. The contract is closely monitored to ensure effective performance and risks presented are considered to be low.
Equalities Implications	Legislation and guidance states that all homeless clients should be given access to information and services to assist them in resolving their own housing difficulty. The Council and DENS have formed a strong partnership through close management of the contract to ensure that the service provided is joined up and clients are provided with appropriate advice and assistance to secure accommodation. Where clients are prevented access to the Elms due to immigration or other health & safety restrictions, appropriate advice and intervention measures are taken to prevent risk and street homelessness.
Health And Safety Implications	Due to the nature of the service and transient nature of the client group, health & safety implications are present when managing such accommodation. The Council and DENS have ensured that through close monitoring and partnership working all relevant steps are taken to ensure the safety of staff and members of the public.
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Margaret Griffiths – Portfolio Holder for Housing</p> <p>Elliott Brooks – Assistant Director Housing</p> <p>Tracy Vause – Strategic Housing Team Leader</p> <p>Sean Fitzgerald – The Elms Manager</p>
Background papers:	<p>Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2018</p> <p>The Elms Contract</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	

Background

1. Prior to the completion of the Elms, Dacorum Borough had 14 bed spaces of night-shelter provision available to assist single homeless clients. With single homelessness and rough sleeping increasing, in addition to growing pressures on local charitable organisations as well as the Council, there was sufficient statistical information to evidence a need for an increase in provision. The brand new modern development, The Elms, built by the Council, includes residential space, IT suite, library and a communal garden in Redbourn Road, Hemel Hempstead. The emergency temporary

accommodation has been developed through the Government's Places of Change Programme with £850,000 central government funding.

2. On the 18 December 2014 the contract for the delivery of The Elms was awarded to DENS. DENS were invited along with other charities to tender to run The Elms and needed to demonstrate expertise in a wide range of areas to convince the panel at the Council who were looking for a high quality of service provision. The charity put together a tender team which drew across the breadth of skills and knowledge within the senior management group. With their extensive experience of running the DENS Night Shelter, Day Centre, Rent Aid, Foodbank and Equipped to Change programme, DENS understand about working on the frontline to tackle homelessness and poverty by giving people the chance to build a better future.
3. The Group Manager Strategic Housing (or post of equivalent level) will be the 'Contract Manager'. The Contract Manager will monitor that the Supplier (DENS) is meeting all its obligations set out in the contract. The Council expects that DENS will ensure effective communication and cooperation with the Contract Manager. This contract will be subject to a monthly formal review meeting between the Contract Manager (or their designated staff) and DENS. As part of this role, the Contract Manager may seek to take action for underperformance or non-compliance. The Remediation Process and further details of the role of Contract Manager are further set out in the terms and conditions of the Contract. Throughout the first year, the Contract Manager has monitored DENS against their mobilisation plan and key milestones. Regular monitoring of the contract includes:
 - Regular monitoring will include:
 - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
 - Formal monthly meetings (recorded in writing) to review performance information and assess compliance with the Service Requirements;
 - Quarterly Audits;
 - Assessment of income and expenditure against DENS business plan;
 - User satisfaction; and
 - Risk management.

The Council expects that DENS will be able to supply monitoring information so that it is readily understandable and detailed in graph or pictorial form where appropriate.

The Council will also require the following information (as a minimum) to be provided at each monthly meeting, to be based on the previous Month:

- Total number of clients accommodated in the crash pad;
- Total number of clients accommodated (excluding crash pad);
- Average length of stay (excluding crash pad);
- Number of clients referred by the Council;
- Number of clients referred by other agencies;
- Number of self-referring clients;
- Number of occasions that cold weather provisions are put in place, with reasons for initiation;
- Total number of days cold weather provisions are in place;
- Number of, and reasons for, unilateral support plans;
- Number and length of exclusions;
- Number of evictions;

- Details of all evictions and exclusions;
- Numbers of rooms ready to re-let: within 24 hours; within 36 hours; over 36 hours;
- Numbers of clients receiving their initial support plan: within 24 hours; within 36 hours; over 36 hours;
- Number and type of repairs logged;
- Number and type of health and safety incidents;
- Any relevant Force Majeure Events or Relief Events;
- Number and type of incidents of conflict and behavioural management;
- Number of CCTV requests;
- Details of CCTV requests;
- Number of complaints;
- Details of all complaints and compliments;
- Client training feedback;
- Details of active partnership arrangements.

To further assess compliance with the Service Requirements the Council will also carry out quarterly audits of:

- Initial assessments and eligibility checks (including local connection);
- Support plans;
- Client feedback mechanisms;
- Site and premises.

The Council will periodically engage clients in feedback sessions to assess whether DENS is meeting their needs. The Council will also ask clients to say whether they feel they have had sufficient opportunity to be involved in providing feedback and scrutiny through DENS processes.

- DENS will also need to carry out:
- a six monthly continual improvement review,
- an Annual Performance Report, and
- an Annual Equality Impact Assessment
- and provide these to the Contract Manager when they are due.

The continual improvement review is to include:

- new or potential improvements to the Services including the quality, responsiveness, procedures and client support services in relation to the Services;
- the emergence of new and evolving relevant technologies which could improve the Services, and those technological advances potentially available to DENS and the Council which the parties may wish to adopt;
- new or potential improvements to the interfaces or integration of the Services with other services provided by third parties or the Council, which might result in efficiency or productivity gains or in reduction of operational risk; and/or
- changes in business processes and ways of working that would enable the Services to be delivered at greater benefits to clients.

Partnership working

1. To ensure successful operational management of the Elms, the Council's Operational Manager (Strategic Housing Team Leader) held weekly

operational meetings for the first 6 months of the contract; thereafter fortnightly operational meetings have been held. Meetings are formally recorded and key actions/issues brought to the attention of the Contract Manager (Group Manager, Strategic Housing). Quarterly Core Group meetings are held to ensure that the contract is appropriately implemented and monitored. These meetings are attended by the Assistant Director of Housing from the Council and the Chief Executive of DENS. To ensure effective partnership working the Council and DENS have held a number of joint training events, liaison meetings and forums, which have been held at the Elms. DENS and Council have taken part in a number of shadowing sessions to gain a better understanding of roles that play a key part in prevention of homelessness and build strong relationships. To foster the ethos of flexible working, Council staff operate a rota and co-locate several days a week at the Elms. This ensures that Elms residents are able to access advice and assistance from the Council on site and additionally frees up vital desk space at the Civic Centre.

2. DENS were a key agency involved in the Strategic Housing team's National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) peer review assessment, which had a successful outcome. The NPSS praised the standard of the accommodation and facilities available to residents and identified the strong partnership relationship that has been fostered as an area of good practice.

Challenges

DENS have had many challenges during the first year, which include:

1. Shortly after opening of the Elms DENS Hostel Manager was suspended and subsequently dismissed. DENS attempted 3 cycles of recruitment for this key role, which were unsuccessful despite many applications. The Council supported DENS closely during this difficult time and agreed a short term secondment for a Council employee to act as Interim Manager pending recruitment, this decision proved invaluable and DENS subsequently offered the officer the permanent role.
2. In addition to the Hostel Manager role, DENS have had a number of personnel changes, with their Assistant Chief Executive, Chief Executive, Facilities Manager, Equipped to Change Manager, DENS Rent Aid Manager and Senior Support Worker all leaving the organisation within 12 months of the contract commencing. The Council have worked closely with DENS to manage any impact. Whilst a partnership approach was taken to solving the staffing concerns over the first year the Council did formally write to DENS expressing concerns and reminding DENS of the contractual requirements in this area.
3. Managing external agencies expectations and ensuring appropriate referrals to the building
4. Identifying suitable successful move on accommodation in the private sector and with out organisations, to ensure that residents can move on in a planned way and not 'bed block' the accommodation.
5. In addition to operating at capacity or near-capacity since opening, DENS have an increase in the number of people using the Crash pad facility which demonstrates the severity of homelessness within Dacorum. January,

February and March saw Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provisions activated. In February SWEP provisions ran for 14 consecutive nights which, has many challenges in terms of staffing, security and managing difficult behaviour. In the coming year the new Elms Manager has recommended extra staffing levels during SWEP.

Performance

1. DENS have quickly ensured that all staff have been able to access vital training to ensure the successful management of the Elms, this training includes HB verification training and the Council's essential training courses information security, fraud awareness, Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent, Domestic Abuse & Safeguarding.
2. DENS have implemented a structured timetable for their Equipped to Change project, this project as seen a number of residents undertaking and completing the Basic Skills Initial Literacy Assessment. This programme is vital to enable residents to access skills needed to regain their independence within the community and assist them in accessing, training, skills building opportunities and employment.
3. Despite a number of challenges DENS have had a successful first year and the opportunities that are open to a facility like the Elms continue to grow. By continuing to work in partnership with the Council, it is expected that the Elms will provide a 'one stop shop' for homeless clients and residents to tackle homeless in Dacorum and provide current and future residents with sustainable opportunities with access to accommodation, education, life skills employment.
4. Service charge collection is the responsibility of DENS and any debts are at DENS risk. Residents are informed on a weekly basis what they owe and issued with warning letters if they fail to contribute. After 4 weeks of non-payments residents are evicted if they cannot provide evidence to support their case for non payment. At this point many residents have abandoned their accommodation rather than repay their service charge arrears. All debts are kept on file and if a former service user re approaches for accommodation they will be expected to settle outstanding debts.

This table shows personal contributions collected, with total to date listed below.

June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
£2,048	£2,012	£2,187	£3,874	£3,727	£3,933	£2,549	£2,587	£4,058	£3,562
£2,048	£4,060	£6,247	£10,121	£13,848	£17,781	£20,330	£22,917	£26,975	£30,53

5. The Elms yearly targets and Key Performance Indicators' are listed below.

Key Performance Indicator	Aspiration service level	Expected service level	Agreed service tolerance	Critical service level
Occupancy rate	96%	90%	70 - 89%	<70%
Percentage of rooms ready-to-	100%	90%	80 - 89%	<79%

re-let within 24 hours of becoming vacant				
Arrears as percentage of income	1.5%	2.5%	2.51 - 4%	>4%
Percentage of clients successfully moved-on (defined later in this document)	95%	80%	70-79%	<69
Percentage of clients receiving an initial support plan within 24 hours	100%	90%	80 - 89%	<79%
Percentage of support plans up to date	100%	90%	80 - 89%	<79%

Occupation Rate	% rooms ready to relet within 24hrs	Licensee Arrears	% of successful move ons	% of clients receiving assessment in 24hrs	Percentage of clients receiving support plans within 5 days	% of support plans up to date
88%	87%	28%	38%	98%	82%	89%

6. The following table shows the payments that DENS will make to the Council following the tender:

Charge to DBC	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Payment to the Council annually following tender clarification	£46,691	£70,335	£71,870	£76,155	£78,896	£343,947
Payment to the Council quarterly following tender clarification	£11,672.75	£17,583.75	£17,967.50	£19,038.75	£19,724	£343,947

This payment to DBC reflects an estimate of income and expenditure based on:

- 90% occupancy
- A rent of £270 per week per resident which will be fully reimbursed by housing benefit
- A payment charge that is 4% of the received rent income from housing benefits
- The Council's payments team invoice DENS quarterly for the above charges as per the Contract
- Annual monitoring of expenditure is undertaken by the Contract Manager and DBC's Housing Accountant, to ensure that any increase in expenditure for items i.e. utilities is reflected and amended within the contract.

Planned Improvements for second year

1. The new Elms Manager is keen to focus on establishing robust move on pathways and options with multi-agencies and improving partnership relations.
2. Wendy Lewington, commences employment as the Chief Executive of DENS in September 2016. The Council will be working closely with Wendy to ensure that the partnership is sustained and to identify additional opportunities for joint working. The Council will also be seeking formal sign

up from DENS to demonstrate their continued support to preventing homelessness in Dacorum and their commitment to the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

3. Promoting the Elms as a multi-agency hub and growing the number of external agencies that use the facility, currently those agencies supporting the Elms include Supporting Herts, Druglink, Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous. These agencies already hold key support sessions for residents in addition to other services provided by the Library, Specsavers and Money Advice.
4. In September a Housing Advice Surgery will commence which will be managed by the Strategic Housing Team. In the same month the Tenancy Sustainment team will also host their tenancy training sessions at the Elms.
5. There are 3 additional rooms at the Elms that were originally planned for storage, these rooms will have bathroom facilities installed to provide an additional 3 bed spaces at the facility.

Customer Feedback

1. DENS value resident's feedback and as such the residents have been encouraged to set up their on Residents meeting, which is chaired and attended by residents. Residents are given an opportunity to express their views and discuss any changes they feel would benefit them. The meetings have been well attended and some important feedback has been received including positive catering, events and course feedback.
2. The residents have a suggestion box, to obtain vital feedback on facilities, staff and opportunities for residents.